



State of the State Address

By

Governor Mel Carnahan

January 22, 1997

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tem, distinguished state officials, members of the 89th General Assembly, and citizens of Missouri:

While every public official in this chamber was preparing to come here this morning, over five million other Missourians were also starting their day.

Outside of Kansas City in the suburban community of Lee's Summit, Mary Capell has already done 45 minutes of aerobics, showered, dressed, fixed breakfast, and taken her child to daycare so she can open her office at Precision Cable. Mary is no longer on welfare because of our nationally recognized welfare-to-work efforts. She was hired by Precision Cable and has already received several raises and promotions. She is also attending classes at Longview Community College three nights a week to get her business administration degree.

On the other side of the state this morning, in the small southwest community of Crane, Katy Paschall is getting her sister up on their farm at 6 a.m., so they can both get to school in Hurley. Katy lives with her adopted family, Hurley teacher Tracy Flood and her



husband Don. With their encouragement she has stayed in school, even though at one time in her life she was thinking about dropping out.

Katy's school in Hurley has gone in four years from being one of the poorest schools in the state to being on the cutting edge of technology because of the Outstanding Schools Act. Like the Hurley school, Katy has risen above adversity with the help of new technology. Three years ago the school had only six computers. Now, Katy has multi-media computers in all her classes and access to a computer lab.

Katy, a junior, has gone from being computer illiterate to one of the top Hurley students on keyboard and a straight-A student. In fact, she is currently designing a brochure for a residential care facility in Versailles as a part of her Technology Lab Class.

Mary and Katy are just two examples of Missourians you probably do not know. And probably will never meet. But it is my privilege to share their stories with you because you have touched their lives.

For the next four months until the final gavel, your lives will be consumed with a mountain of paper—bills, amendments, memos, and constituent letters. Your days will be filled with phone calls and meetings. Your mind will overflow with priorities and the demands of your job.

In the face of all that, please don't allow Mary Capell and Katy Paschall to be forgotten. Don't lose track of why we're here. It's not about paper, procedures, and process. Or politics...or even programs. It's about

people—the people we serve. It's about providing them with new opportunities for a new century.

Several of those people whose lives you've already touched are with us today. One of them is the Vice President of Human Resources of MEMC Electronic Materials, Brad Eldredge. MEMC is a high tech company that produces silicon wafers used to manufacture integrated circuits and computer memory devices.

This prestigious Missouri company was selected by Industry Week as one of the Ten Best Plants in America and has won our Missouri Quality Award and the Governor's Pollution Prevention Award. So naturally, Brad is proud to be a part of such a great Missouri company that continues to grow.

Because we want to make Missouri an even better place to do business, we are working with outstanding companies such as Brad's to expand their operations in our state. And in our efforts to create new jobs, we have been working with Brad on training employees so he has the high-skilled work force he needs at his plant. This past year, the company made \$175 million in capital investments at the St. Peters plant and created 200 new jobs.

MEMC is one of our many business partners in building a better Missouri through a stronger economy. And we're pleased to have Brad here as our guest today.

Brad, would you please stand up so everyone can let you know how much we appreciate having you here today and your company here in Missouri?



STRONG ECONOMY AND WISE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

I am proud, too, that because of aggressive economic development and wise financial management, Missouri is known as a great place to do business. Our low debt and low taxes are highly attractive qualities to both new and expanding businesses.

Missouri is recognized as a state that takes a “results-oriented approach” with “conservative accounting” in operating a state budget. And we balance that budget every year—a feat the federal government has not been able to match. Missouri has a legislature and a government that take the financial responsibility very seriously, and I want to commend the members of this body, especially your budget chairs, Senator Lybyer and Rep. Lumpe, for year after year sending me a balanced budget and sending it to me on time.

I want to also assure Missouri citizens that our Council of Efficient Operations will continue to work with our departments to improve government’s ability to deliver services in a cost-effective manner.

Our wise budget decisions, detailed strategic planning, and excellent financial management have earned Missouri a national ranking as the third best managed state in the nation from Financial World magazine. And the Missouri economic news continues to be great. Under my administration, we have created more than 300,000 new jobs.

The best news is that all of our indicators point to continued economic gains in 1997. But looking be-

yond 1997, I believe we can ensure our long range prosperity by investing in the new opportunities that I am proposing today for a new century.

SALES TAX CUT

Because of our strong state economy and tremendous economic growth, we can afford to give Missourians tax relief. Due to our outstanding economic growth, our state revenue for the budget year we just completed in June far exceeded our expectations, creating surplus revenues of almost \$230 million. These are revenues which constitutionally cannot be spent. They must be returned to the taxpayers.

From this day forward, I want to see that money put back in the pockets of working families. The fastest and fairest way to accomplish that goal is to completely eliminate the three percent general state sales tax on food. Everyone must put food on the table.

This return of food dollars is equivalent to nearly two weeks of free groceries each year for every Missouri family. We must not allow another year to pass without providing this real savings to all Missourians.

I urge you to send this \$230 million permanent tax cut to my desk. We need to work together in a bipartisan way to give this tax relief to our citizens.

WELFARE REFORM

Three years ago, we made Missouri a model of welfare reform through dramatic and measurable change. A model that has been singled out for praise



changed only shortchanges our future because they do not have the money to invest in a better life for themselves and their children.

So we will be assuring Missourians that we take the obligation of child support seriously by starting a license revocation program; using better paternity establishment procedures; establishing state and national data bases on new hires and wage withholdings; and giving authorities better information about whether those who owe child support are meeting their obligation to their children.

Yes, we are moving swiftly and prudently to develop a new approach in the way we move recipients from dependency to productivity. But even with these changes, government cannot achieve the levels of success we need to achieve without the support of business.

Our reforms call for bold partnerships with the private sector. What I didn't tell you about two of our special guests before that I want to share with you now is that Michelle Gale and Brad Eldredge know each other. Brad is in charge of hiring at the MEMC plant in St. Charles where Michelle works.

I commend MEMC for helping Missouri move people off welfare and into jobs. I hope that other Missouri businesses will follow the wonderful example of MEMC in putting welfare recipients to work. Public-private partnerships such as this one will be even more important as we replace a broken system and reframe

the future into one that moves people into jobs. I urge our state business community to join us in this pursuit.

EDUCATION

Last week, in my inaugural address, I renewed my commitment to improving education in Missouri. When we speak of new opportunities for a new century, nothing can be more crucial than preparing our young people for the future. That is why I am pleased to announce that once again we will be fully funding our school foundation formula this year.

Over the past few years, I have visited schools all over our state. Because of these visits, I have had the opportunity to see what excellent preparation we are offering thanks to our reforms from the Outstanding Schools Act.

Reduced class sizes in lower grades, early childhood education for more children, better vocational education, and more computers in every school are making a difference.

One of the students I met whose life has been changed by our educational reforms is Trevor Mathenia from Springfield. Trevor was a student who made the decision to go to Central High School when he heard it would be joining our A-Plus program.

As you may know, the A-Plus program offers students a career-oriented curriculum as well as challenging academic courses that provide more opportunities for education and employment after graduation. A-Plus



students must also meet certain standards of achievement, attendance, and citizenship.

Trevor is sold on the A-Plus program because he knows what a difference it has made in his life. Today, as a junior, he is one of two students who travels to junior high and middle schools in Springfield telling others about the advantages of our A-Plus program. He will be in the first class to graduate in Central's A-Plus program.

Trevor has also found what a difference our efforts have made at Central High School in other areas. For example, he tells us that when he started, Central had very few computers, and they were basically restricted to the office and the library. Now students have access to over 300 computers all over the school—many with Internet capabilities.

Trevor plans to take advantage of our A-Plus tuition scholarships. With it, he can study two years at a community college, before continuing at a four year institution to gain a degree in political science.

But to be eligible for the scholarship under A-Plus, Trevor must keep up a 2.5 grade average, maintain a 95 percent attendance record for three years, avoid drugs, and do 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring. He will be starting his tutoring of junior high and middle school students soon.

Please welcome one of the countless young people whose lives we have changed through our commitment to better education, Trevor Mathenia. Trevor, would you please stand?

HIGHER EDUCATION

Trevor certainly recognizes that people entering the workforce today need more than a high school diploma. At least 89 percent of all new jobs require some type of education beyond high school.

But cost is often a barrier to acquiring that education and training. I want to make two years of higher education more affordable and accessible for all Missourians. That is why I am proposing what I call Challenge Scholarships.

Under my proposal, we will phase in a tax credit of up to \$1,500 a year to help pay tuition for every Missourian who wants two more years of education beyond high school. It is imperative that we make two years of education beyond high school commonplace. There is no better preparation we can make for our children's future.

So I ask you to help me make a 13th and 14th year of education a goal for all Missourians by approving my Challenge Scholarship program. This is just one more new opportunity we must take to build the high-skilled workforce of a new century.

LITERACY

One of the biggest impediments to achieving that goal is illiteracy. Reading unlocks so many doors. I cannot imagine anything more agonizing than living outside those doors—the wonders inside forever hidden from view.



Yet authorities tell us that one of the main reasons one million Missouri adults do not have a high school diploma is because they are functionally illiterate. Therefore, I am recommending we expand our efforts for adult literacy.

We will also be targeting the literacy of the next generation as well. Students who are poor readers in the early grades are much more likely to perform poorly in school and, eventually, drop out of school entirely. So I am recommending a greater effort to catch children at an early age who are at risk of reading failure.

We will train teachers from all across Missouri about intensive reading strategies. They can then return to their school districts to teach at-risk students and to train other teachers in the area.

As literacy efforts spread to all parts of our state, we can free Missourians who have been imprisoned by their inability to read—free them for better jobs and more opportunities.

Literacy brings access to knowledge that is essential in the electronic age. Students today can go anywhere and learn about anything with a few clicks of a computer mouse. So books are no longer the only key to success. It's the keyboard as well.

Our students must also be computer literate before they enter a world of work where windows and web sites are a way of life.

Since I first became governor, I have pushed to bring computers into all Missouri schools—kindergarten

through college. I believe just as strongly about giving our students the advantage of the latest technology today as I did four years ago. That is why I am recommending that we nearly triple our on-going investment in computers for schools this year.

As I stated in my inaugural address, I would like to see us reach the goal of making every Missouri youngster computer literate by age 12. However, in doing that, we must make certain our students can have access to the Information Superhighway—that vast encyclopedia of knowledge.

The Information Superhighway is so popular today that many people can't even get on, let alone maneuver through all the traffic. My recommendations this year include widening the on-ramps and adding a new lane so Missouri students can get on the Information Superhighway and travel more rapidly to the places they need to go.

I believe bringing the world to our students electronically will prepare them to enter the real world as adults.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Making certain our students can travel on the Information Superhighway is not our only school transportation concern this session. We want to make certain our children are safely transported on school buses throughout Missouri.



Since last year, our Safe Schools Initiative has been working to make classrooms, hallways, and school yards safe. This legislative session, I want to take an additional step to safeguard the lives of children who ride school buses. In general, our school buses have an excellent record of safety. But even with safety mirrors, a bus with a high front grill creates a blind spot for the driver when small children pass directly in front of the vehicle.

I want to help reduce that danger by requiring that all conventional school buses be equipped with crossing control arms. These control arms are rods that stretch 10 feet from the front of the vehicle to keep students from crossing directly in front of the bus. At least 28 states have already approved the use of these devices. We will be offering one-time grants to school districts to help absorb the installation cost of the arms. Our timetable is to have all buses equipped in time for the start of school in the fall of 1998. I want to ensure that when Missouri schoolchildren are leaving a school bus, they are stepping into safety—not harm's way.

HEALTH

Protecting our children has always been a major priority of mine since I became governor. One area we have really concentrated on this past year is getting our youngest children immunized.

With your help, my plan to remove financial barriers to immunization, make it easier to receive them, and educate our citizens about the need for protection is working wonders.

Today we have with us one of our immunization success stories—LaTasha Winters of Kansas City and her 13-month-old twin daughters. I heard from LaTasha as a part of our immunization effort last year after Jean and I sent a congratulatory card to her on the birth of her twins.

These congratulatory cards, which we have been sending in partnership with Hallmark Cards, contain a detachable immunization record so parents can keep track of their children's immunizations. We have found them to be quite an effective tool in helping us raise parent awareness about the importance of immunizations.

LaTasha wrote to tell me what a good idea those cards were, and since then she has been keeping the twins current with all their immunizations. She is entered into a Kansas City-area computer listing so her health care provider can remind her when the twins need to be immunized.

She takes her children to a clinic affiliated with Children's Mercy Hospital, and her babies receive their immunizations free of charge. While she is here, we want to commend LaTasha on the steps she has been taking to make her own life better.

She has been studying to become a certified nursing assistant through Job Corps. While she's at school, her grandmother watches the twins.

And just yesterday, she took her high school equivalency test. Here is a woman that is completely devoted to protecting her children's health and continuing her



own education so she can provide for those twins as they grow up. It is a pleasure for me to recognize LaTasha Winters and her twins.

LaTasha, would you please stand?

Thanks to stories such as the Winters twins, Missouri was able to reach its goal last September of having 75 percent of all Missouri two-year-olds immunized.

Another part of our responsibility as parents in keeping our children healthy is ensuring safe, quality daycare. This year we will be intensifying our efforts to provide quality inspections of daycare centers.

We will further increase our commitment to daycare by making certain this essential service is available for parents who need it. We will also be doing more to link daycare with educational opportunities.

With an approach called Educare, we are making day care a more meaningful educational experience for young children. By bringing home daycare providers and teachers together through Educare, children are receiving the early childhood skills they need to succeed in school when they get older.

We want all Missouri children to get a good start—in a secure home, free from harm, and in a healthy environment that encourages early childhood learning.

CRIME

However, without solid law enforcement in Missouri, all of these bright opportunities could be overshadowed by crime in our cities and neighborhoods.

Since I took office, Missouri has built a national reputation for fighting crime—longer sentences, tougher penalties for violent juveniles, and increased penalties for sexual predators. We have also given our law enforcement officers more tools and training so they can keep Missourians safe.

A shining example of this is Shelley Jones, a peace officer with the Columbia Police Department. Shelley was shot with a 12 gauge shotgun during the course of an arrest. Yet she not only survived, but was able to return fire and assist in the subsequent investigation leading to the arrest and conviction of the suspect.

She attributes her survival and her role in the ultimate arrest to the increased training she received, such as the training we approved for all police officers in 1993 and the continuing training requirements we put into law in 1994.

Let me introduce you to this courageous officer who put her life on the line—Officer Shelley Jones.

Shelley, would you please stand so we can acknowledge the great job you do for the people of Columbia?

We owe it to the men and women of law enforcement like Shelley to properly train and equip them. And thanks to our efforts, they are receiving that train-



ing and equipment. Tough new laws and better law enforcement are paying off for all of us.

However, if we are to make certain that dangerous and violent criminals are not released early...if these menaces to society are to be kept away from our children, off the streets, and far from our schools... we must have the prison space to house them.

It is necessary to build two more prisons and expand others to ensure violent criminals are kept behind bars where they belong.

TRANSPORTATION

I will also be looking forward to the completion of the work of our Total Transportation Commission. Clearly, effective transportation is critical to Missouri's economic vitality.

Our commission is reviewing all of our transportation needs as well as how we can best build and maintain a system of transportation for the next century. I want to commend the commission for their work to date. We will receive their recommendations later this year.

Once more, it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and begin the work which lies ahead. But as I begin this second term, I feel a larger responsibility than ever before because I will be the last governor of this century and the first governor of the next.

That distinction holds with it an obligation to lead our state in a manner that can bring one hundred years

of accomplishments to a climactic close. But it also summons us to prepare for a new era. I have no doubt that together we can achieve both goals. The future begs for our best.

So I will be looking forward to working with you in the days ahead to do what's right for Missouri. But before we go to work, I'd like to ask you to do one thing for me. On your desk is an envelope. Would you please join me and pick yours up. In your hand, you now hold a life. Just like the lives you met today here in this chamber. Because in that envelope on a piece of paper is a story. The story of a single mom who has successfully left our welfare system to support herself and her kids. Or a child who now has new opportunities because of what we have done for education. Or a businessman or woman who is succeeding because we were there to help find and train the people needed to get the job done.

Every story is different. Every story is true. But one theme runs through them all. These are all Missourians who are successful because you helped write their stories...with your courage...your vision...and your passionate belief that we can make a difference. Don't lose those qualities. Read your story. You might even think about putting it away as a reminder.

So on those days when the meetings and the paperwork close in on you, you can read it again and keep your focus on why we're really here. Right now, these two hundred people are going about their business, and they are not thinking about you. But I hope you're

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thinking about them. For they are living better lives and have a brighter future because you are here for them.

In the words of the apostle Paul: "Let us not be weary in well-doing. For in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Let those of us in this chamber be strong in that resolve. Let us close out this century in a blazing sunset of achievement the like of which our state has never seen before...confident that together, and with God's blessing, our best days are yet to come.

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